

858 enforced between brothers and sisters and parallel cousins of
864 opposite sex. Apparently many girls as well as boys masturbate,
and young mothers who are nursing babies—and hence
[838] forbidden sexual intercourse—occasionally do so also. Accord-
ing to the girls themselves, homosexual relationships among
girls are not rare. These relationships usually begin by imita-
tion of other girls before a girl's first menstruation. Practically
all married women on Kambara say they have had such
relationships before marriage, but afterwards they discontinued
them without difficulty.

862 From the age of eleven, however, girls are usually more or
[585] less guarded by their parents, for virginity at marriage is
prized. A girl's virginity is usually tested on her wedding
night by her husband's female relatives, and the next morning
the results of the test are made public. Fear of ridicule and
the anger of her husband's relatives when she marries prevent
some girls from accepting lovers before marriage, which
usually does not take place until a girl is at least eighteen years
old. Moreover, virgins are afraid of being deflorated. They
are not sure just how the act is accomplished although they
have witnessed sexual intercourse.

836 There is considerable difference in the degree of pre-marital
178 freedom found on the various islands in southern Lau. The
most powerful force acting against pre-marital freedom is the
virginity test. Although this custom is not observed at every
wedding in Lau it is the rule on conservative islands like
Fulanga, where standards of morality are relatively strict. The
Lauans, however, try to keep the custom secret from western
visitors because of fear of disapproval and ridicule. In general,
the native emphasis on chastity has tended to break down
in relation to the degree of Tongan and western influence.
Among the islands visited, the greatest freedom was found
on Mothe, which lies at the trade cross-roads for canoe traffic
in southern Lau, and which was formerly the point of depart-
ure of sailing canoes to Tonga.